

Senator Mary Margaret Haugen

10th Legislative District

Summer 2003



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Committees

Senate Highways &
Transportation,
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Dear Friends,

The 2003 legislative session turned out to be one of the toughest in recent memory. A worsening transportation crisis and the largest budget shortfall in decades confronted legislators when we arrived in January.

We rose to the transportation challenge and approved the most significant investment in 13 years with strong bipartisan support. We also passed a budget that closes a \$2.6 billion deficit **without a general tax increase**, approved significant prescription drug legislation, gave the go-ahead to a capital budget that will generate construction jobs to stimulate our economy, and protected the Skagit Valley's precious farmland by passing a bill to prevent the breaching of tide gates.

Thanks to all of you who contacted my office with your questions or concerns. It's important that I hear about the issues that matter the most to you, so feel free to call or write me any time.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Margaret Haugen". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mary Margaret Haugen
State Senator
10th Legislative District



© Dan Karvasek, Freeland, Wash.

Saving Skagit Valley agriculture

One of my top priorities when I joined the Legislature was protecting the Skagit Valley's last remaining family farms. This session we were able to spare some 30,000 acres of prime Skagit farmland from being rendered useless by damage from Puget Sound saltwater.

Together with Rep. Dave Quall of the 40th District, I worked to pass legislation to stop a Department of Fish and Wildlife plan to expand salmon habitat by installing self-regulating tidegates in dikes that would flood coastal fields.

I support saving salmon in the Skagit Valley, and so do the region's farmers. But inundating some of the most fertile soil in the world with saltwater is not the way to do it. The department's plan would have destroyed the valley's ability to grow anything, including the tulips that generate millions for our economy and draw visitors from around the world.

Fish shouldn't be pitted against farms, and this bill helps assure that there will be plenty of room for both.

Closing the budget gap

Filling a \$2.6 billion budget hole without a general tax increase required a large dose of compromise. No one got everything they wanted. But the budget protects our state's most vulnerable citizens—and it doesn't rely on money from expanded gambling.

I'm pleased to report that we avoided making significant cuts to our state's nursing homes. The thought of seriously jeopardizing our ability to provide for our seniors who need it the most was unacceptable to me.

However, I am disappointed in the cuts to K-12 education. Specifically, we had to **delay** until 2005 the annual cost-of-living raises for our teachers, which voters approved in Initiative 732. We also couldn't allocate as much money as I-728 required for reducing class sizes. These were high priorities for me. Unfortunately, both of these initiatives were approved during better economic times, and without a way to pay for them.

This budget reflects the tough economic times we're in. It is responsible, and it shows that the state can—and will—live within its means.

For more information on the budget, visit
www.leg.wa.gov/senate/scs/wm.



Greenbank Farm © Dan Karvasek, Freeland, Wash.

Capital budget creates jobs

Some of our area's best-loved treasures will get an economic boost from a two-year, \$2.6 billion capital budget that will create up to 14,000 jobs and stimulate the economy.

The capital budget funds appropriations for building and construction projects, and much of it is financed through the sale of bonds.

- **Greenbank Farm** on Whidbey Island will receive \$1.5 million for the next phase of its renovation, which includes adding space for eight new businesses, improving the internal access roads, and adding parking and landscaping.
- **Deception Pass State Park** will receive \$2.2 million to help develop the Sunrise Resort Property.
- \$135,000 will help acquire land at Camano Island's **Utsalady Beach**.
- **Skagit Valley College** will receive \$300,000 for pre-design of its science building.
- Mount Vernon's historic **Lincoln Theatre** will get \$110,000 to continue its renovation.



Transportation: They said it couldn't be done!

No one thought we could pick up the pieces from Referendum 51's defeat and address transportation so quickly. This year, however, Republican and Democratic legislators worked together to craft a bipartisan plan that is tied to real projects, makes real improvements and creates real family-wage jobs for our economy immediately.

The 10-year plan invests \$4.2 billion in projects throughout the state. The revenue comes from a one-time 5-cent increase in the gas tax and a 15 percent gross-weight fee increase for commercial trucks, which will pay for highway improvements. Gas tax dollars can be used only for highways and auto ferries, so the gas tax is a true user fee. Only those who drive the roads pay the tax.

To pay for other modes of transportation such as ferries, passenger- and freight-rail and public transportation, the package includes a 0.3 percent sales tax increase on new and used vehicles.

Reforms have been enacted to assure that the new revenue is well spent. These new laws will require regular performance audits of transportation agencies; involve legislators directly in planning local construction projects; streamline environmental permitting; assure that prevailing-wage rates for construction workers are accurate; and expand DOT's apprenticeship opportunities and create an employee skills bank.

This new investment in transportation is also a jobs program. It will jump-start our economy by putting up to 3,000 people to work in family-wage jobs during the first year alone. Many construction projects will begin this summer.

More than 20 years of neglect has left many transportation needs in this state. This package won't fix them all overnight, but it gives us an excellent foundation to build on.

For more information on transportation, visit
www.wsdot.wa.gov.

What's in it for us?

Highways, ferries and rail lines that serve the 10th District will be improved by the new transportation revenue.

More than \$85 million from the new revenue package will go toward making state Route 20 safer and less congested. Construction will begin by 2006.

- The current two-lane highway will be expanded to four lanes near Burlington from Fredonia to Interstate 5 — and the interchange at I-5 will be redesigned.
- Turn lanes will be added in each direction from Ducken Road to Rosario Road to improve turning at Ducken Road, and guardrails will be replaced and lighting added to improve visibility.
- A spur to SR 20 from Quiet Cove Road will be added.

East of Stanwood, \$7.7 million will be spent to improve the interchange at I-5 and SR 532. Roundabouts will be built at the northbound off-ramp and at the old SR 99 intersection with SR 532, the existing park and ride will be moved, and the southbound I-5 off-ramp will be modified to right-turn only.

For ferries, \$298 million will help build four new auto ferries, make the Anacortes and Mukilteo terminals more accessible to passenger trains and buses, and catch up on preservation work.

Another \$239 million will fund statewide passenger- and freight-rail projects, including \$21 million in track improvements between Seattle and Bellingham. This will bolster Sounder's commuter train service between Everett and Seattle and enable Amtrak's Cascades passenger service to add a second daily round trip between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. An additional \$45 million will improve freight rail movement.

Prescription drug success

The cost of prescription drugs is rising at double-digit rates. Fortunately, this session the Legislature finally agreed on how to make prescription drugs more affordable for thousands in Washington.

We passed a bill that creates a state purchasing consortium, which will enable state agencies that purchase drugs to identify preferred drugs and negotiate lower prices with drug companies. It also develops a discount program for the disabled and people 50 or older who have incomes of less than \$36,000 for a family of two.

In addition, it directs Medicaid to seek a federal waiver as a first step toward creating a Medicaid-subsidized prescription drug program, and creates a pharmacy connection program that will help low-income people obtain no-cost or low-cost drugs.

The measure makes Washington the first state in the nation to attempt to use its buying power and a preferred drug program as leverage to force drug manufacturers to negotiate for lower prices on prescriptions on behalf of the uninsured.

For more information on this program, feel free to contact my office.



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